



# Washington State Gambling Commission

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## Gambling License Certification Program

Who can get a license? Types of licenses available. Overview of the Licensing process.

The Washington State Gambling Act ([RCW 9.46](#)) gives the public an opportunity to engage in limited charitable and social gambling without fear of organized crime infiltration or the potential for fraud by professional gamblers. **The Gambling Commission was established as a regulatory agency with its major responsibility directed toward preventing individuals with undesirable criminal backgrounds from obtaining a gambling license or working in a licensed establishment.**

The Gambling License Certification Program is an investigative process where applicants are evaluated through an in-depth analysis to ensure they are suitable to hold a gambling license.

We use the certification process as an important step in its "prevention" approach to gambling enforcement. Through careful screening and evaluation, the certification program plays a key role in preventing potentially undesirable organizations or individuals from obtaining a gambling license. All applicants must successfully prove they qualify for a license. The ability to get a gambling license rests solely on meeting the criteria outlined in the Gambling Act. We will only issue a license if an applicant successfully passes our background checks.

### Who Can Be Licensed

- Bona Fide Charitable or Nonprofit Organizations
- Commercial Business
  - primarily engaged in selling food and / or drink for consumption on-site,
- OR**
- engaged in manufacturing / selling gambling equipment / supplies / services.
- Individuals working for licensed organizations or businesses (such as dealers or manufacturer representatives).
- Persons and businesses working for tribal casinos receive a certification, rather than a license (such as dealers or management companies).

### General Qualifications

#### • Bona Fide Charitable or Nonprofit Organizations must:

1. Be organized to provide **only** one or more of these nonprofit services:

- Educational • Civic • Patriotic
- Political • Social • Athletic
- Fraternal • Agricultural

Or be one of the following:

- Religious Society • Church
- Fraternal Society • Grange
- Agricultural Fair

2. Be organized and operating at least 12 months prior to applying for a license.
3. Must have at least 15 actively participating members, 18 years of age or older, each with equal voting rights.
4. Be classified exempt by the IRS from federal income taxes.
5. Demonstrate accomplishments of organizational purposes.
6. Successfully complete a criminal and financial background investigation.
7. Provide evidence of purchase / start-up funds sources.

#### • Commercial Businesses must:

1. Demonstrate that the gambling activity would be a commercial stimulant to on-premises food and / or drink sales.
2. Have a valid liquor license, if applicable.
3. Provide evidence of purchase / start-up funds sources.
4. Ensure all persons with a substantial interest successfully complete a criminal and financial background investigation.
5. Show proof of financial arrangements, ownership, rental or lease agreements.

#### • Individuals:

1. Must provide proof of employment status.
2. Must successfully complete a criminal background investigation.

## Licensed Gambling Activities

- **Charitable or Nonprofit Organizations may be licensed to operate:**
  1. Amusement Games
  2. Bingo Games
  3. Fund-Raising Events (Reno / Casino Nights)
  4. Punch Boards and Pull-Tabs
  5. Raffles
  6. Social Card Games
  7. Agricultural Fairs
- **Commercial Businesses may be licensed to operate:**
  1. Amusement Games
  2. Card Games
  3. Punch Boards and Pull-Tabs
  4. Punch Board and Pull-Tab Service Business
  5. Distributing (equipment and supplies)
  6. Fund-Raising Event Equipment Distributor
  7. Linked Bingo Prize Provider
  8. Manufacturing (equipment and supplies)
  9. Service Supplying (consulting and other services)
  10. Agricultural Fairs
  11. Special Sales Permits
- **Individuals may be licensed as a:**
  1. Card Room Employee (such as a dealer)
  2. Commercial Gambling Manager
  3. Charitable or Non-profit Gambling Manager
  4. Distributor Representative
  5. Linked Bingo Prize Provider Representative
  6. Manufacturer Representative
  7. Services Supplier Representative
- **Individuals and Commercial Businesses may be certified to work in Tribal Casinos as:**
  1. Class III Gaming Employees (dealers)
  2. Class III Management Companies or Financiers
  3. Class III Manufacturers / Suppliers of Gaming Services, Supplies, and Equipment

## Applying For a Gambling License

- Applications are available at our Lacey headquarters office and on our website.
- Applications must be signed, dated, include the proper fee, and be delivered to our Lacey headquarters office.
- The fee for the license you are applying for is listed on your application or on a fee schedule included in your application packet.
- You may be asked to supply fingerprints and provide proof of income from various sources.
- Fingerprinting services are available at our Lacey headquarters office Tuesday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. There is a \$13 non-refundable fee. Have the exact amount, \$13, in cash or check. We do not accept credit or debit cards. Bring your application and photo identification. Fingerprinting services may also be available at your local police department.
- It takes about 60 days to process an application. As such, you should submit your application at least 60 days before you want to open a gambling business or begin working for a gambling business.
- If you have questions, contact us before submitting your application. This is helpful in preventing problems/omissions and reducing the time to process your application.

## How the Licensing Process Works

- After we receive your application, a licensing file is created and a Licensing Customer Service Specialist is assigned to review and evaluate your application.
- A Financial Investigative Unit Special Agent may be assigned to conduct a criminal background check and investigate the source of the money used in your gambling business. Investigations may involve local police as well as state, federal, national, and international authorities to ensure all persons that have a substantial interest in a gambling business are qualified to be licensed.
- A copy of your application may be sent to the local Gambling Special Agent assigned to your area. The agent may contact you to inspect your business site.

- You may be contacted during the licensing process to determine your eligibility to hold a license. We may request additional information such as leases, corporate papers, by-laws, purchase agreements, financial statements, criminal history statements, personal information forms, fingerprints, etc. You can avoid delays with timely responses to these requests.
- After the investigative process is finished, your application is reviewed to determine if you qualify for a license.

**If your application is approved,** a license will be mailed to you within one or two days. Accounting packets, a rules manual, problem gambling information and other special notices may be included with your license.

**If your application is denied,** you will be told why. You may not have qualified for a license because you did not:

- Supply the required information
- Pay the proper fees
- Pass the criminal or financial background investigations.
- You may supply additional information to prove your suitability or voluntarily withdraw your application.
- If you do not respond to requests from staff for additional information, we may close your file.
- If you do not pass our criminal or financial background checks, you may request an administrative hearing to explain your circumstances to an administrative law judge.

## Commonly Asked Questions about the Application Process

**Question:** How long does it take to process a gambling license?

**Answer:** The average processing time for an in-state application is 60 days. Organizations and businesses should plan their activity to allow for this amount of processing time.

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**Question:** Why does it take 60 days to process an application?

**Answer:** License applications are processed on a first come, first served basis. This amount of time is needed to conduct the criminal and financial background investigations.

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**Question:** What can delay my application?

**Answer:** Delays are commonly caused by:

- Incomplete applications
- Required documents are not attached
- Delays or repeat inquiries to local and national police for background checks
- Applicant not responding to questions
- Applicant qualification problems
- Inability to verify applicant's financial sources

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**Question:** When will the Gambling Commission issue my license?

**Answer:** We will issue a license only after we are sure you are qualified to operate or participate in the gambling activity.

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**Question:** Can commercial business gambling licenses be transferred from one owner to another?

**Answer:** Once a gambling license is issued to a business, the license becomes void if the business is sold. In some special circumstances, licenses can be transferred, such as transfers to family members, incapacity, death, receivership, bankruptcy or assignment for benefit of creditors.  
(WAC [230-06-106](#), [230-06-107](#), [230-06-108](#))

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**Question:** Why must nonprofit gambling managers complete mandatory training?

**Answer:** To educate the managers and increase voluntary compliance with gambling rules by:

- Creating a better understanding of our role in regulating and controlling gambling activities.
- Emphasizing manager responsibilities.
- Familiarizing managers with accounting procedures and local tax reporting requirements.
- Outlining gambling laws, rules, procedures, and other general information.

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**Question:** What happens when a license expires?

**Answer:** A license is valid for one year or less. If your license expires before you have a new one, you must immediately stop all gambling activities. Your local Gambling Agent will be notified and visit you to ensure all gambling activities have stopped and / or all gambling equipment has been removed.

**For licensing questions:**

Contact us at (360) 486-3440 or

[AskUs@wsgc.wa.gov](mailto:AskUs@wsgc.wa.gov).

**For regulatory and operational questions,**  
contact our Regional Field Office closest to you.

**Everett** ..... (425) 304-6300

[EverettFO@wsgc.wa.gov](mailto:EverettFO@wsgc.wa.gov)

**Spokane** ..... (509) 325-7900

[SpokaneFO@wsgc.wa.gov](mailto:SpokaneFO@wsgc.wa.gov)

**Tacoma**..... (253) 671-6280

[TacomaFO@wsgc.wa.gov](mailto:TacomaFO@wsgc.wa.gov)

**For federal** tax deduction and reporting requirements,  
contact the Internal Revenue Service at  
[www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

**If you or someone you know  
have a gambling problem,  
call (800) 547-6133**

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